

Executive Summary for the Pacific Northwest Recreation Resource Advisory Committee

Site: Timber Butte Cabin
Site Type: Expanded Amenity
Proposed Action: New fee site
Recommended Fees: \$65/night

Background

Timber Butte is located on the Middle Fork Ranger District of the Willamette National Forest, about 25 miles east of Eugene, Oregon. The cabin was constructed as a replica of the L-4 gabled style Lookout, commonly built in Region 6 during the 1930's. It measures 14ft by 14ft and is surrounded by a wooden catwalk on four sides. It was built in 2005 through volunteer efforts with a \$10,000 grant from Lane County and other contributions by individuals and organizations. Although the original intent was to use this site as an interpretive facility, it has yet to be used for this purpose. Nor has it been used for administrative purposes. Since its completion, it has been left unlocked and has been utilized only by some adventurous members of the public who know of its existence. It remains clean and in good condition, and requires only minor improvements to bring it on-line as a rental. This cabin would be available on the National Recreation Reservation System to rent from mid-April through mid-November, depending upon the snow levels.

Financial Analysis and Market Demand

In 2007, the Willamette National Forest conducted the Recreation Lodging Feasibility Study (RLFS) to take a comprehensive look at current and proposed facilities on the forest, determine which facilities should enter/remain in the recreation lodging program as well as determine a timeframe for facilities to come online. The RLFS process has three primary goals that include: (1) financial sustainability, 2) heritage preservation, and 3) recreational experience. Timber Butte meets the goals of providing for a recreation experience and to be financial sustainable if start up costs are minimized. The recommended fee of \$65 is based on the facilities, amenities and setting, a market demand assessment and a financial analysis in the RLFS. One of the goals is to recover the operation and maintenance costs for the entire recreation lodging program on the forest in order to have a sustainable program.

The demand for recreation lodging is very high in the Pacific Northwest, with a healthy demand in the area of the Willamette National Forest due to its close proximity to major population centers especially the counties of Multnomah and Lane. In the Pacific Northwest the potential demand for recreational lodging far exceeds the supply of these facilities and lookouts tend to be more popular than cabins. Timber Butte Cabin is located on the southern end of the Willamette NF and within an hour's drive of Eugene/Springfield and within a 3 hour drive from the Portland Metropolitan areas.

Public Involvement

Public involvement to add Timber Butte Cabin to the fee program has been conducted over the last year and resulted in full public support. Public involvement included notices posted onsite, at the Middle Fork Ranger District visitor information office and on the Willamette NF Website, and was published in the Federal Register. A legal notice was published in the Eugene Register Guard and news articles appeared in two other local newspapers. Federal legislators were also briefed. Over the last three years, the former Lowell Service Center has received phone calls from potential cabin renters inquiring as to when the cabin would come online as a reservable rental.